



Podcast Transcript: Student Interviews

Student 1 – Napua Kalima

Student 2 – Ioane Boshard

Host – Olani Lilly

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Host: Okay, awesome. Well welcome everyone to our podcast number seven. During this series of podcasts, we are going to be interviewing students who have either gone to a full immersion school at some time during their educational experience or our or our attending language programs within their schools.

Host: Would you mind doing a little introduction introducing yourself?

Student 1: ‘O Harry Pacheco, Martine ke kane ‘o Astellas ka wahine. Noho pu laua a hanau ‘ia ‘o Jerome J. Martin he kane. ‘O Charles Afong ke kane ‘o Aida Palakiko ka wahine. Noho pu laua a hanau ‘ia ‘o Audrey Nalani Ahfong he wahine. ‘O Michael Dell Motas ke kane ‘o Karissa Kyle Ka‘anohipu‘upu‘u ka wahine, noho pu laua a hanau ‘ia ‘o Risa Poliahu Kalima-Motas he wahine. ‘O Jeron Kanani Ahfong ke kane, ‘o Risa Poliahu Kalima-Motas ka wahine. Noho pu laua a hanau ‘ia Napuakaumakani Kanani Kalima- Martin he wahine.

Aloha, I am Napuakaumakani Kanani Kalima- Martin daughter of Jeron Kanani Ahfong Martin and Risa Poliahu Kalima-Motas. I reside here in Hilo on the Big Island. I'm originally from the island of Oahu. I am currently 18 years old, and graduated from Ka ‘Umeke Kā‘eo Public Charter School. And now after graduation, I am currently a preschool teacher's aide at Kai Koholā preschool at Ka ‘Umeke Kā‘eo Aloha.

Student 2: Aloha mai kakou ‘o wau o Ioane Boshard. No Kona mai au. Ua hele au i ke kula o ‘Ehunuikaimalino. Ua hele au i ke kula o Kamehameha, Nawahi a keia manawa hele au i ke kula nui o UH Hilo.

Host: Aloha. Mahalo for coming and for taking the time to share about your Hawaiian language immersion experience. And so, let's get right into it and really tell us why did you attend a Hawaiian language immersion program?

Student 1: It all starts with my Makua. My parents, they are the people who put me first in the step of joining a wine immersion school. But as I got older, I chose to stay because, for me, my culture is my identity. And without my culture, it would be really hard, I think, for myself, I'd be very lost. And it's just as a person for myself, it's, it means a lot to have a



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connection with people, even if it's your ancestors that you've never met, and especially with the land. So while I'm while attending emerging wine immersion, schools, it helped a lot with understanding who I want to be come as a person, because cultural culture, traditions and stories, really, I felt, I feel like guided my my perspective, the way I think, the way I breathe, and everything. It's a work ethic, and it's basically who I am. Thanks. Awesome.

Host: When did you start Hawaiian language immersion? What grade were you?

Student 1: I was four years old in kindergarten at Ke Kula Kaiapuni o Waiau, then all the way up to us to sixth grade and then when I reached seventh grade, I attended Ke Kula Kaiapuni o 'Anuenue and were for a year before I moved up to Hilo, and I attended Ka 'Umeke Kā'eo from eighth grade all the way till grade.

Student 2: As an adult I'm very, very honored to have this. I'm very, very happy to have this is history of mine. I'm very, very proud that I come from this background that I come from this community, being able to speak my own language, being able to carry out certain cultural practices and are carried out much these days is such an honor to uphold a big a big piece of history from my people.

Something that I was taught at a very young age and when I when I got older, I understood the importance of that and yeah, I've just, I've just been in awe about of I like that.

I started going to 'Ehunuikaimalino, which is in Kona, in papa mala'o, kindergarten.

And that was the only instance where the entire curriculum I believe was in Hawaiian originally before that I've gone to preschool and usually that was under Kamehameha preschool and they would of course incorporate you know Hawaiian songs and and little jingles here and there. But was at 'Ehunui that had the teacher speaking to you directly in Hawaiian.

Host: Wow. So you've been in immersion your entire educational experience? I Yes. Wow, that's lovely. Was there a difference in the programs as it relates to like you are on a O'ahu? And then you move to Hilo, was there a difference in the program?

Student 1: Yes, I personally think that's because when I moved to Hilo, I had a big like, a big nature shock, I would say, because when I was living on Oahu, you are mostly taught the language, especially more so like the younger age. But when I finally moved up to Hilo, I had a lot more opportunities to get have connection and appreciation for my environment, and surroundings. But, um, other than that, the big difference, I think, other than what you learn, probably was the sense of community, like it was a lot more stronger. And I now that I'm older, I realized that community is means a lot. And like, the saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child. So even though I attended three different schools, and two of them



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were on O'ahu. And then the school that I graduated from was on Big Island. I appreciate all of the knowledge that I got from all schools.

Host: So you'd move to Kamehameha in ninth grade? Yeah, right. Okay. Yeah. So tell me Okay, so was there a difference? So you went from 'Ehuinukaimalino, which is a Hawaiian language immersion school to Nawahiokalaniopu'u which is another Hawaiian Language Immersion School, where there are differences between the two schools? If there were what were they?

Student 2: The difference between 'Ehuniui and Nawahi. They share a lot and have a lot in common, of course, because they, they have similar goals, in my opinion, to teach Native Hawaiians their culture, their history, that language. I would say the biggest difference between Nawahi and 'Ehuniui is that Nawahi is a product of the university. Which is right there, right in town. They're very, very, they work very, very close in tangent. Everyone always kind of on the other side of the islands. So, communication and staff to transition from there would be a little bit.

But I think that is one of the main difference between Nawahi and it really is just closer to like the hub of trying to figure out what is 'olelo Hawai'i? What is Hawaiian culture? Yeah. Yeah. Then to both of those difference between 'Ehuniui and Nawahi to Kamehameha Schools

Yeah, I would say that the differences kind of speak for themselves.

Because Kamehameha isn't a immersion program. It is a college prep. Program. And privately, it's privately. It is a private school.

I think that was like the biggest difference was going from speaking Hawaiian, every day, for the entirety of the day to speaking Hawaiian every two weeks, every two days of a week. Yeah, for an hour. And, you know, the only thing you got is just speaking at home with your family.

Host: Did you have like classmates from Nawahi or 'Ehuniukaimalino that joined you?

Student 2: A handful of my friends from Nawahi, from my grade came with me to come on now. Yeah, it was quite, it was quite funny.

We clung to each other very quickly, just because we knew as like, Oh, shucks. All these people who don't really speak Hawaiian, do they understand?

Host: I'm wondering, did you and your friends that moved from Nawahi, did you feel comfortable even though you're surrounded by other Hawaiian students and staff? Did you feel comfortable in speaking Hawaiian language on this in this within this new school and is primarily English-speaking school?



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Student 2: To be honest not as much. It was definitely in small increments, like was it? Was it kind of nice to talk with my friends? Who knew Hawaiian? Yeah. Oh, my gosh, I think in those moments, those were the best. Yeah. We could speak for hours. And you could have an entire conversation in Hawaiian and people would look at us and be like, What are they talking about? Yeah, you don't realize but that's, that's your mother tongue?

Host: What do you think are some of the benefits of attending an immersion school that other schools, students attending other schools don't get to experience?

Student 1: I think I would go back to more so the mana'o or the idea of having a connection with land. Because when I was attending Ke Kula Kaiapuni o Waiau, it was divided, it was a big school, and half the school was Hawaiian immersion. And the other half was strictly English students. Something I was doing since a young age was comparing the the students with like, their personality wise, like their respect and stuff like that. And one thing I noticed was that a lot of the time, the saying of like aloha aina. Taking care of land is something that wasn't really isn't a common thing that a lot of other students would think of, think about. If they're not from an immersion school, they don't come with like an understanding with having a value over their environment. I feel like another thing would probably be respect. One thing I noticed while attending immersion schools you just know you don't do certain things, and you just know that it wouldn't be something your family would be proud to hear if you did something bad. That makes sense. Like there's just this sense of accountability for your actions, like of course we make mistakes. That's the whole entire idea of being a human being. But while attending an immersion school, if it means a lot to really, just how Respect for not just the line, but your elders, for example, or the younger ones, there's always this sense of responsibility that, oh my gosh, I need to be a good leader. And I need to be a good example, to not play around in front of the babies. Because if not, they're going to follow me. Or I cannot play around in a disrespectful manner in front of my elders because I'm going to get in trouble. And that's very shameful.

Student 2: Were one of the benefits I have. And I will always say this is that I am proud that I have this knowledge that I'm very fortunate to be able to speak my mother tongue. That I can say, Yeah, I know how to hula. I know how to make the lei. I know how to perform oli and undergo protocol. Yeah. And all these things that I know separate me, not only as a as an individual, but as a Hawaiian. Sure. I feel very, very blessed and honored. Yeah. To have these skills.

Host: In an immersion setting, you have like instructional materials on the wall, that classrooms are like filled with those wise sayings and proverbs because they communicate the values that are embedded in the language. And so can you tell me, tell me about that?

Student 2: I ka 'ōlelo no ke ola? I think it's one of the most profound ones, in my opinion. Because it's so true.



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And that's what I really like about these, 'ōlelo no'ēau. But this one in particular. What it translates to is, in words, there is life words, there is death. I ka 'ōlelo no ke ola. I ka 'ōlelo no ka make. you basically can speak words of affirmation, you can speak words of life, that give life that bring up the spirit of someone. And at the same time, you can also tear that person's soul down with your words, you can basically talk on the death literal and real sort of way. Knowing that your words have my mana, we're not any words have power is basically what the 'ōlelo no'ēau means.

Host: What do you think are some of the challenges of attending an immersion school?

Student 1: Because any native language, for example, like Hawaiian. when you go to school, they're mainly trying to just teach you the native tongue, everything in that native language. So you don't learn English, until your fourth fifth grade. I'm 18 years old. And that's a challenge, because I hate to say this, but we live in a society where English is the main language, where if you don't speak English, then something's wrong with you. Or it's a problem that you're speaking in your native tongue. I appreciate, not being surrounded by a lot of English when you're younger, but not knowing English until a certain age can get hard, because now the student is like, somewhat behind what is like, the correct grade level? How to speak English, how to write proper English, etc.

Student 2: One of the biggest challenges I've faced, and it was very early on, I'd say, sixth grade. So Middle School, beginning of middle school. I felt really incompetent with the English language. I still do to be honest. I'm working on it though. I basically, in middle school, learned how to read and write in English for the very first time I knew how to speak it. I knew how to make out words like I knew app. But

I was most likely in a third second grade proficiency level of proficiency for the English language. And that was, that was not good for a sixth grader. And it was a history class, it took a history class in Kamehameha, under this guy named Willard really, really cool teacher basically taught me how to write an essay in English have tried writing essays in English. Funny story, I knew how to write an essay in Hawaiian first before writing an essay. In English, there was there's that disconnect? Yeah.

Yeah. It felt it all felt overwhelming. And I think at some point, I felt like I was I was mad at my family for, you know, putting me in the situation for making me feel dumb. Like, yeah, I'm not going to succeed because everybody speaks English. Right? And it's kind of it's kind of too much.

Student 1: I guess, knowing that it's okay to be different, if that makes sense. When I was younger, I don't know how to communicate with my other friends. Sometimes, because Hawaiian language is my first language. And that goes, same with like my siblings. It becomes a challenge, because you somewhat, underestimate yourself, but in the end, we need to go through that hard time to really grow as a person and learn that that's not



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actually a problem. So it's just a lot of character building. Understanding that being Hawaiian or being Native is a positive. And although you may be feeling like, oh my gosh, I don't know how to do something like how another child who doesn't go to an emergent school might know how to do like, that's okay. Because in the end, you will learn how it just takes a little bit more time to learn certain things than it does for a student who has only learned English.

Host: So given that, when you have your own family, would you be sending your child to an immersion school and why or why not? When you Do that,

Student 1: Oh, automatic. We'll be living and breathing their Hawaiian culture and language. That's, that's a given. And I will make sure to tell that to anyone that I date. I want I want my offspring to have a connection with where they came from. I was just having a conversation with my dad about this is that there's this group in Keaukaha, in our community, Hui Ho'olei Malu'o. And every fall, every summer and spring, I do my best to attend their programs. And it's basically where a bunch of students from all different types of schools, from grades kindergarten to 12th grade, come together, and they just work on the line, they just work on the line. And, yeah, I was telling my, that my dad that I had, because I was busy over the summer, I hadn't had any time to hang out with these aunties and uncles with these community members. And I felt very lost, very lost. Like, it makes me so happy to be a part of a community to be a part of other people than just my family that I feel loved. And sometimes that can be hard to find at school. That's why I'm so I would want my keiki, I want my child to be surrounded by that. By that knowledge, that wisdom, that love and support, because like you said the 'olelo no'eau, the wise saying, "A'ole pau ka 'ike i ka halau ho'okahi" there is no knowledge that stops in one halau, one school house, and so on. It takes a village to raise a child. And I feel like now that I'm 18 years old, and I attend these workshops, not just as a student, but as in but as helper at an internship. It means a lot, that community can raise a child and help them to become a better person. Yeah, like all of the people that I've surround myself with, they only want me to become better. And if I make a mistake, in their own loving way, they correct me and they will let me know like, hey, like, girl that probably wasn't nice of you to say to somebody or I'm not even necessarily just the way I might talk to somebody, but hey, you didn't who huki kalo correctly, you didn't pull the taro out of the soil correctly. Like let me show you how to do it. There's always this feeling of wanting to help and not wanting to be selfish and self centered. We're gonna figure it out yourself. Right, right. So answer your question. I would without a doubt I would put my child my keiki into this kind of environment that I have been raised.

Student 2: I asked Makalani, hey, so I'm totally cool with what you kind of want to do for our kids. You know, if it's homeschool, which she was homeschooled, and it was only until I think middle school that she got accepted into Kamehameha and then graduated from Kamehameha, and then went to college in Oregon. That's where she graduated. So she's



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kind of had a different. She's had a different educational experience than I have. She told me that she would want nothing more than to have her kids be able to speak quite nice. And it made I won't lie, it made my world smile. My face was just like, full of joy. I was like, Yes, that's why I love you.

But it's just, I just know, too much good. Came from it. And if I could impart that if I could just see a glimpse of that same enjoyment and pride and good pride. Not that any of the bad kind, but a good sense of pride. Yeah, in knowing that this is who you are as an kanaka. I think that'd be great.

Host: So now, you're an educator, right? Knowing the benefits and the challenges, what would the things you would want to keep? Or what would be some of the things you'd want to change in an immersion school to help make that experience better for the next for your keiki?

Student 1: Oh, that's good question. I would want to keep is, ceremonies. So an example is, every day, I mean, every day before school technically starts. And this has happened for me ever since I was in kindergarten. before school starts, we are all we are all lined up and grouped together. And we have to chant, a chant that's given to us by wherever you are from. And basically, what you're chanting the first people who need to chant are the students, and they chant to ask the kumu, the teachers, "hey, kumu, I'm ready to start my day, I have centered myself, can I please come into the classroom?" "Can I please take your knowledge that you are willing to share?" "Can I please have not get knowledge from you?" Then after the children have chanted, after the younger generation has done their chant, and they have Stand straight, they chanted proudly. Then the teachers do their own chant. And every school that I've gone to, um, they have their own chants, and that's based on where you're from. That I will automatically keep, feel like that really helps with, like I said earlier, centering the child,

You cannot stop speaking your native language, or I understand it might be hard at times. I mean, as a teacher, I can really say this, because I work with three and four year olds who their first thing which is English, most of them, but it's it's something to help strengthen the student, the next generation, as well as yourself with knowing that like, okay, might be a challenge, but it was also a challenge for our ancestors, our elders, to be told that they're not allowed to speak.

Host: That's great.

Host: How has your immersion experience has prepared you for what you're doing now?

Student 2: It has taught me a lot about myself. And when the most part is just made me more confident I can go in to a business setting and know these things about myself. And know that I am in a room full of very smart individuals. And I have worked my way to being



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the kind of person that I am today. Well educated Hawaiian, who has been blessed with so many opportunities, and I can't take the people involved with those opportunities. But with those opportunities, there have been given comes a responsibility to, to bring back to learn to bring back and to basically uphold the lahui (Hawaiian nation) to come. Understand that you're doing this for your people.

It's given me confidence and a sense of responsibility and duty.

Host: When you talk about duty, like, what does that? What does that look like for you?

So, me and my fiancé are thespians. We are theater nerds. Oh, yeah. And we have loved telling stories for the longest time. I think my love for theater kind of stemmed very early on in my high school career.

Being a part of all of Kamehameha has Hawaiian operas. Yeah. Oh, my gosh, incredible. So, every year, Kamehameha School puts on an entire school ensemble show, usually pertaining to a certain story back in ancient Hawaiian times or during the years before the overthrow any part of history and have it or even future stories. It's ho'ike. It is the epitome of Hawaiian theater. For Kamehameha Schools, and the entire school just bands together put on I think, total of three shows. And it is quite the experience. I guess they call it more of an opera is entirely in Hawaiian language entirely in the Hawaiian language. So funny, the most recent one has been to Scotland. They got to perform their opera in Scotland and the story was about Kamehameha and it was called Pai'ea.

Student 1: Honestly, being the teacher, if I'm being completely honest, really made me realize how much I appreciate my teachers. First of all, because I didn't realize how much work it took to being a teacher, even if you're a three-year-old. Right? Sure. It takes a lot. But by going to immersion, by being the teacher now versus the student, it really made me somewhat like compare the way I was taught, versus the way I want to teach. Because we all have that great teacher that we very much appreciate. And we're like, oh my gosh, I want to be like them. I want to be like them. I love this teacher, because I know I have that teacher, I have a few teachers who I really appreciate, and want to be like, and there's also some teachers that really, maybe wasn't your favorite teacher. But in all honesty, actually really challenged you, and made you work hard for what you want.

I think it really helps me with understanding that we don't know what goes on in a person's life. I'm in a household. And with that idea of, again, it takes a village to raise a child. Sorry, I'm gonna keep going with that. Because I love that idea. And I feel like it goes great with understanding, like, in Hawaii, a local person and their upbringing, right. So, it's, by being an immersion school it somewhat encourages me, it makes me happy to be that extra person in this small child, child's life, to help raise them and help nurture them with a lot of new knowledge, whether it's a new song, singing the colors of the rainbow, in Hawaiian, or counting their numbers, writing, learning how to write their name. And so it's like, oh my



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gosh, should I really be speaking, singing, chanting, for some reason, we always feel embarrassed. But by coming from that, knowing that sometimes there's this sense of embarrassment. hey, take pride in what you do. Because it took a lot for our kupuna or elders, to go through what they had to go through. And if they see you now, they will be so proud. So proud. So, I hope that answers your question.

Host: Now that you're teaching and again, most of your students coming in, are not Hawaiian is not being spoken in the home. What are some of the strategies you use?

Student 1: Yeah, I got you. As I'm speaking to them. I point at certain objects. I'm telling asking like a student, do you want to read a book in Hawaiian? So "Makemake 'oe e heluhelu i puke." Okay. I would use my hands as like, like really signing language but like, just like, show them visually, like what I might be saying. And if they're still confused, then that would be standing up and pointing, and then the way as a child will be able to understand what you're saying is if you continuously speak it around them. Yeah. Even though that's hard. I know another thing is singing songs. Singing songs, especially when you're three years old, four years old. We have the Color Song and base on where you go to school at, and which Island write the song is saying differently and some words are said differently. But for the most part kids know their Colors, they know red, yellow, green, blue, orange, etc. And so, by singing the song and showing them like, printed pictures of certain colors, and singing at the same time, it really helps a child grasp what's being said. So, it's repeating things, not because you want to be annoying, but you're trying to instill it in, in their little brain. Yeah. That's so far. That's what I think.

Host: What are your plans for the future?

Student 1: So right now, I am currently not going to school, because I wanted to first put myself take a step into the searching work field, and then test it out if I really want to do it or not. Yeah, instead of like, feeling like I wasted my time or money. Oh. But I can say that by either spring or next fall, I will be attending college because I do want to continue this be around these kids, especially growing up in an immersion setting. And now I'm seeing the joy in other kids seeing them, like actually catch on to words, or at least they might not be able to converse with you. But you can say a whole entire chant and directions of what they got to do in Hawaiian, and they grasp every little thing you said, it gives me like so much encouragement, that this is something I want to do in the future. And I actually really do want to be on principal one day. I am so proud. Even if if you see me through a screen or in person, I can confidently say that I am so proud that I graduated from an immersion school. It just so happens that the school that I graduated from is actually the first ever Hawaiian immersion school from kindergarten to sixth grade or high school on Big Island. And so I come with so much pride when I say that, and I would love to be the principal at that school.



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Oh, yeah, I do. And, um, the first thing I would say is to even though you might be scared on like to speaking your native tongue. Just having a sense of pride that it's okay that I can speak my native tongue, because that is literally what makes me and if you see somebody struggling or wants to learn, I encourage you to encourage them to learn, I encourage you to find it in yourself, to help others. I get it, like, all the time, whether it's parents from my students, or it's a relative or family friend, where they say like, "Hey, I'm trying to speak Hawaiian but I don't know how." And just having 'i'ini, the will, to want to learn is already like half the battle. It's already half the field trip, all you have to do is put in the work after that. It's like, it's so easy. And another little tip for those. Those of you who are trying to speak your native tongue, I feel like it would really help with just knowing the idea that just by saying one word, knowing one word in your native tongue will help a lot. So by adding that word into your sentence structure while talking to somebody, it will really help you and those you're talking to. Because I know for myself with my ohana my family, I will throw in a couple of Hawaiian words. And it will actually teach them and like somewhat make them catch on to what I'm saying. Like, oh, wow, I didn't know that was a Hawaiian word, or why she didn't know that's what that meant.

Student 2: I am very, once again, very, very proud of being a product of the Hawaiian immersion program, especially that we have here on Hawaii. I'm very, very proud that we have individuals who make this a possibility. Because it gives kids hope. And I remember conversations being had with my mom and my teachers that yeah, the language is not doing so great. In fact, it's kind of dying. And it is up to you and the keiki o Hawai'i.

Host: Awesome. I love it. Well, thank you, again for your time and for sharing about your experiences.